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LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR RURAL PEOPLE

by

Lalla Ben Barka

LC/NAIROB

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

12-16 February 1990
Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

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1. CURRENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education in Mali falls into three main categories: traditional, non-formal and formal. This chapter will deal mainly with the last two categories, without belittling the first category which has an important function in our still traditional societies. In fact, traditional education plays a primary role, especially in the rural areas, where it backs up but also sometimes clashes with the education system referred to as modern.

1.1 Formal education

This form of education was inherited from the formal education system of France which established the first schools in the former colony, now known as Mali. According to UNESCO (1981), "the colonial heritage" was characterized by:

- Low rate of school attendance: very selective and, therefore, undemocratic education, reserved for a minority of children. In 1960, primary school enrolment was only 7 per cent;

- Unsuitability both in terms of content and objectives. The aim of colonial education was to provide the colonial government with junior officers, who were devoted, heart and soul, to the mother country and to the service of an extroverted economy. Technical and advanced training were neglected. At the time of independence, Mali had only three veterinary doctors, about a dozen professors, between eight to ten medical doctors and three pharmacists.

Faced with such a situation and in order to meet the pressing needs associated with real political and economic independence, the leaders of the new nation undertook a reform in 1962, based on democratic and socialist principles: social justice, equal opportunity of access to education for nationals and cultural disalienation of citizens, who should be able to relate to their environment.

To attain these objectives, the 1962 reform was aimed at:

1. Both mass education and quality education;

2. A type of education which could produce, with the maximum economy in time and money, all the personnel that the country required to implement its the various development plans (Perthe, 1980, p.10).

The education system was therefore reorganized accordingly and special emphasis placed on basic education, suited to the requirements for harmonious socio-economic development, in other words, a form of education which takes account of both cultural and technological factors.

1.1.1 Elementary education

This covers a period of nine years, divided into two stages (cycles): the primary school (premier cycle) lasting six years and the middle school (second cycle) lasting three years. The primary school serves as preparation for the middle school and is aimed particularly at integration in the labour market. For this reason, considerable efforts have been made to ruralize it. The middle school, at the end of which a certificate is awarded, guides the pupils either towards general secondary education or towards various levels of technical and vocational training and the other sectors of economic activity.

The principal objective of elementary education is to "inculcate" in the children the fundamental knowledge indispensable to the exercise by each citizen of his/her essential economic and civic responsibilities (UNESCO, 1980, p.29).

What results are expected from elementary education today?

The maximum rate of school attendance is 25 per cent, which is far below the 50 per cent threshold considered to be necessary for laying a solid basis for economic and social development and still substantially short of the 100 per cent rate set in Addis Ababa in 1961 as target for the 1970s (Etats généraux de l'éducation, 1989) (National Conference on Education, 1989).

The causes of such a situation are numerous and derive mainly from the lack of budgetary resources (although Mali devotes about one-third of the national budget to education), the quality of education, the curricula which are not always suitable and low output (high dropout rate of about 40 per cent, most of whom become illiterate eventually).

According to Berthe (1981), out of every 1,000 pupils in the first stage of elementary school, 223 are sent out during the first year, 693 or 69.3 per cent drop out before the fifth year, 225 go as far as the sixth year and only 6 per cent manage to complete the cycle without repeating any classes.

The figures are alarming and led to two alternatives being put into effect since the beginning of the 1980s: ruralization and use of local vernaculars in some schools on an experimental basis.

However, these programmes come up against technical, methodological and sociological problems due to poor planning and organization of ruralization activities, which many perceive to be a waste of time because they do not have any real bearing on classroom instruction and are based on the quantity of production. Although the use of local languages in the classroom in the formal system has proved to be beneficial, it has not been possible to generalize it. This is because most people, particularly the educated elite, still regard these languages as second rate and prefer to use French.

In their legislation, after having painted a gloomy picture of elementary education, the Etats généraux de l'éducation in 1989, recommended several measures aimed at raising the enrolment rate, improving the quality of curricula and adapting them to the socio-economic needs of the country. It was observed that:

The promotion of schooling as a factor of development, depended on the mobilization of the entire nation to integrate education in its priority programmes and accord it the same importance as desertification control, opening up of land-locked countries and the attainment of food self-sufficiency (p.43).

1.1.2 Secondary education

Secondary education lasts three years and can either be in the form of general secondary education or technical and vocational training.

General secondary education prepares students for university education while the technical and vocational training produces graduates with various technical skills for the labour market.

The secondary schools encounter numerous problems, including under-equipment, lack of teaching materials, libraries and classrooms, imbalance between the literary and science subjects, very expensive scholarships and inadequate instructor training. For their part, the technical and vocational schools face severe difficulties in each of the specialized fields.

1.1.3 Higher education

Institutions of higher education (Advanced Teacher Training Colleges) train senior teaching service staff for government service, law, economics, health, rural development activities, etc.

In its report on education in Mali in 1981, UNESCO states that the uncontrolled increase in enrolment is a major problem facing higher education. This results in the production of a much larger number of graduates than is needed (particularly in the literary disciplines), a severe lack of qualified permanent teachers, shortages of classroom accommodation, equipment and other resources (UNESCO, 1981, p.71).

1.2 Non-formal education

This is defined in Mali as training given as a supplement to basic education. This type of education is provided through structures such as the Centres d'animation rural (CAR) (the Rural Leadership Training Centres), the Centres à orientation pratique (COP), (the Practical Guidance Centres), the Community Development Centres (CDCs) and the Literacy Centres (CAS).

1.2.1 The Centres d'animation rurale, the Centres à orientation pratique and the Centres de développement communautaire

The CARs are the product of the merger in 1966 between the rural civic services and the seasonal school, and provide two years of practical agricultural training to rural youth. There are about 50 such schools in the various administrative regions of Mali.

The COPs, which are fewer, are attached to the CARs and are geared towards young elementary school leavers (primary level) who are unable to continue their studies. The COPs are practically non-existent today. The CARs, on the other hand, admit about 20 trainees every two years in each centre. Five centres admit both male and female trainees and have drawn up special programmes for women accompanying their spouses.

Each Centre is administered by a Head of the Centre, his/her assistant, a military official and a matron (for the mixed centres). The training begins with a three-month military training, followed by rural activities:

- Cultivation of some 20 hectares of land using modern techniques of ploughing, fertilization, insect control, crop rotation, etc.;

- Husbandry of animals used for traction and/or for food;

- Maintenance and management of equipment; and

- For women: hygiene, nutrition, child care, dyeing, etc.;

- Literacy courses.

The produce of the farming activities contribute towards the upkeep of the trainees.

The activities of the CARs have grown considerably but the number of trainees is still low (1,000 trainees every two years at the beginning of the 1980s) and the costs of training are relatively high.

One of the interesting aspects of this type of training is the possibility for the products of CARs to obtain a complete set of ploughing equipment which they have to pay for within three years. This arrangement has been made possible through assistance from European countries. However, repayment is not always easy.

For their part, the CDCs have one objective: the training of community development technicians responsible for organizing and assisting the grassroots to be more effective in the solution of their immediate problems. These technicians, together with government representatives, technical departments and leadership cells, form a community development action committee, whose task is to:

- Raise awareness of, initiate and organize community activities;

- Gradually make the people assume their responsibilities;

- Prepare and conduct training courses for leaders;

- Plan, co-ordinate and assess community development activities;

- Mobilize local resources.

1.2.2 Literacy education

Literacy campaigns have been organized in Mali since independence and a wealth of experience accummulated over a long period of time. A first attempt was made from 1959 to 1965 to teach the French language, using the staff and the teaching methods and equipment of the formal education system. This ended in failure.

From 1965 onwards, a new approach was adopted and the concept of functional literacy was more fully defined. Literacy programmes would be in the local languages, which meant conducting extensive linguistic research, because unlike the British and the Belgian colonialists, the French never made use of the local languages in the education system. Everything had to be started from scratch in this country which had 10 main languages, not forgetting the numerous dialects of these languages.

The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP), together with UNESCO, selected Mali as the location for its 1968 to 1972 pilot project and four languages were used to provide literacy training to some 70,000 producers in 2,000 centres.

The results of this project were very encouraging in terms of the interest shown in it by the peasant population. To keep the newly literate people informed, a rural newspaper written in a local language was launched in March 1972. The current circulation of this newspaper is 125,000 copies.

1.2.2 Structural framework and organization

Since 1975, an institution of the Ministry of Education, the Direction nationale de l'alphabétization fonctionnelle et de la linguistique appliquée (DNAFLA) (the National Directorate for Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics) has been responsible for literacy and post-literacy training of adults in Mali. Although DNAFLA trains adults in the urban areas, it operates mostly in the rural areas where it should be recalled, 80 per cent of the Malian population live.

The function of the DNAFLA is to conduct linguistic research, produce teaching material and train field instructors. It has a little over 100 people and staff at various centres in the regions. The number of staff varies from region to region and they work either for the Regional Education

Departments (DREs) or the Rural Development Operations (ODRs). The staff is trained by DNAFLA, together with staff of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

DNAFLA monitors and evaluates the activities of literacy centres and the training of local instructors through its national and regional staff.

It is a government institution which co-operates with all the other institutions responsible for organizing activities for rural people through national co-operation, rural development, international NGO and other projects.

1.2.2.2 Costs, current situation and problems

Literacy programmes are financed from various sources:

- The people themselves construct the Centre and its facilities and also cater for the literacy organizer, who is most often paid in kind (cereals, work on his farm, etc.);

- The State grants an operating budget which, though modest, provides the basic minimum;

- The ODRs are most often financed from external sources;

- The international organizations and NGOs also make substantial financial contributions.

For example, in 1977, in the region covered by the Opération arachide, 70 per cent of the cost of literacy programmes was financed by external sources, 20 per cent from the Malian budget and 10 per cent by the people themselves (UNESCO, 1981).

Such dependence on external assistance is a very worrying prospects for the future of literacy programmes. Although these programmes are very successful in terms of quality, the same cannot be said in quantitative terms.

Figures for the 1988 and 1989 campaigns are as follows:

Villages covered	3 673
Number of centres	6 293
Number of male organizers	6 088
Number of female organizers	468
Number of male students	62 858
Number of female students	9 007
Number of functionally literate	
Men	14 848
Women	593

Source: DNAFLA.

As can be seen, the figures are low, even if they are for two literacy campaigns only and the percentage of female participants is almost derisory. It should be noted that Mali has a population of about 8 million of whom 51 per cent are women and more than 40 per cent under 15 years of age. Such a situation has several causes ranging from lack of financial resources, poverty of rural people as well as the unsuitability of some programmes and lack of personnel to organize village communities.

It is in consideration of all these problems that the literacy centres have for a decade now been seeking new strategies for training rural people at low cost, strategies which would make it possible to introduce in the communities a new profile of functional literacy and of rural leadership that genuinely promotes development and makes for training of the rest of the community.

This new type of trainer will be considered in the next chapter on the basis of two projects started in 1980 and 1988:

- Advanced training of the functionally literate;

- The training of development trainers (an original experiment in the Sahel).

II. FUNCTIONAL LITERACY AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION

2.1 Advanced training of the functionally literate

The 1970s were characterized by the mobilization of rural populations for literacy programmes. The campaigns which were successfully conducted generated new needs which led to the peasantry asking what they could do with their newly acquired ability to read and write.

As a matter of urgency, adequate plans should be made to address the needs of functionally literate people to acquire technological, scientific, legal, organizational and other expertise. The fact is that the efforts made in post-literacy training activities have been insufficient to cope with demand.

The idea is to provide the kind of training that could best enable the functionally literate to cope with an environment rapidly changing in natural and socio-cultural terms.

This is the real and fundamental dilemma to be addressed through constant research and experimentation in providing advanced training to the functionally literate.

The researchers, teachers, sociologists and linguists working on the project were first to admit that their aim as Malian researchers in the national literacy drive was to try and contribute towards the solution of the development problems of their country. Accordingly, they were bent on finding a training system that was appropriate to the rural world and its needs.

For five years, they had travelled the countryside and worked with the rural people so that they could some day secure a better future. Their report on that experience should be the beginning of a debate that they hoped would be as wide-ranging as possible among development experts. Their hope was to provide development practicians with the concrete and relevant information that they could use in their routine and individual daily assignments (LA FSHA, 1982).

2.1.1 Objectives

The general objectives were three in number:

- To train illiterate people scientifically and not merely by rote;

- To explain the causes of occurences and allow for their verification, so as to prepare local people better to be able to solve agricultural, animal husbandry, health, technological, management and other problems;

- To verify the sociological assumption that traditional associations "leavened" through literacy and functional literacy training programmes can become proper channels for testing and propagating essential innovations for development.

The specific objectives are applicable to such training areas as:

- Agropastoralism: To rehabilitate impoverished soils and better utilize animal production systems to enhance productivity and improve the use of land resources.

- Health: To involve the whole village in the solving of health problems and in the control of major diseases, making them to undertake primary health care schemes and to pay attention to hygiene and sanitation.

- Technology: To acquire the necessary technical skills for environmental control and development.

- Economic and civic life: To acquaint the village with its rights and obligations in terms of civil status, the country's political life, the role and calculation of taxes, credits and marketing.

2.1.2 Socio-pedagogical principles

In order to achieve these objectives, seven principles were identified:

- Training in the village for the village. Such training should be oriented not towards the training of individuals but of the whole village as a group. The training themes are therefore chosen bearing in mind the major problems of the village. Particular attention is accordingly given to self-examination carried out in the village assembly to determine the training content and the expectations of the village. In this way, the whole village feels involved.

- Training all young people in the village even if such training will initially involve only the functionally literate who will thereafter spread the new knowledge. Here, the traditional youth associations play the role of training structures.

- Linking education with action, training with transformation. This principle is important and hence it is essential to integrate the training project into the overall transformation project. The trainers do not therefore just embark on lone adventures. They ensure that the training scheme has a field of application.

- Training by first taking into account the previous knowledge of trainees before imparting new data. Care is taken to overcome the superiority complex for which literate people are notorious and to make them accept that although traditional society may have no writing, it is not without knowledge. Such knowledge is not only practical but also scientific. It is therefore, necessary to involve the old people in the training of the young.

- The training should be science- and experiment-based. There has always been the tendency to underestimate the ability of rural people to understand and their legitimate desire to know not only the why but also the wherefore. Thus, emphasis should be given to the scientific explanation of soil chemical constituents and micro-organisms, photosynthesis, the onchocercisis transmission cycle, graphs showing infant weight progression, the use of microscopes and experiments.

- Linking scientific training to general training.

- Training should not be full-time at a stretch but alternating. This would allow for a link between school and environment and between training and production.

2.1.3. Training

This should be conducted in three phases:

- Before the training programme. The village is selected by such criteria as presence of functionally literate people, village consent and interest in a specific training area. A team, therefore, visits the village in order to evaluate the needs of the people and to set the date for their training.

- During the training programme: The team which is multi-disciplinary, including teachers, sociologists, linguists and training specialists, informs the village assembly of the training methods and objectives. An initial social evening is organized during which the village lists its needs by order of priority, the themes being identified; and the night is devoted to the gathering of traditional knowledge on a chosen theme.

Such traditional knowledge is analyzed at the literacy centre where the trainers and the functionally literate prepare data sheets on the theme.

A second social evening is organized during which the functionally literate read out the new things learnt to the assembly and the second theme is discussed likewise.

Though this recitation, the trainers are able to evaluate the level of knowledge acquired by the functionally literate as well as to employ a more appropriate method of transmitting knowledge to the people, that is, through the functionally literate.

At the end of the training period, the functionally literate people are given specific assignments.

- After the training period

These assignments are many: reading and analysis of the data sheets, keeping of the civil status records, sensitizing the people on such various problems as sanitation and nivaquin treatment.

Functionally literate people are assisted in these activities by rural development supervisors. After a certain number of training programmes, the training team prepares post-literacy pamphlets from the project data sheets for distribution in the centres.

2.1.4 Assessment and conclusions

Following an assessment of experimentation with this methodology, it has been possible to proceed to the next stage which is mainly that of training local and regional trainers.

A pedagogical assessment showed that the methodology was accepted both by the people and the technical services. The training met the needs of the people, enabling them to fully participate in the scheme. It led to concrete actions and its multidisciplinary nature opened up vistas of new techniques and stimulated a new form of co-operation and involvement in the rural environment.

The sociological assessment showed the wealth of traditional knowledge recorded, analyzed and written out. The impact of the training has been visible especially in such agricultural areas as manuring, seed treatment, agricultural technology and farming techniques and in such health areas as nivaquin treatment and village pharmacy industry. It is necessary to note the impact of such training on the improvement of communal organization.

In conclusion, it can be said that with this methodology, it is possible to give to the village a minimum of education, with the functionally literate people playing an essential role in the transformation and improvement of living conditions in the village.

Such training is organized by and for the village community which, as already seen, chooses and defines its training needs, using its own human resources to secure greater use of new knowledge and their genuine commitment to the process of change. Participation is voluntary and total and this explains the method's success.

2.2 Training of development trainers

This new programme is designed for people in the Sahel zone in Mali, a zone seriously affected by desertification and drought. It is also mainly meant for women, for benefiting from it as mothers would reduce the problems of educating children.

The project entitled "Literacy for women and young ladies in the Sahel zone" also concerns the male population and was meant to avoid creating disharmony in the communities. It was financed by UNICEF and executed by DNAFLA in co-operation with all the field partners/communities, technical services, and NGOs.

2.2.1 Objectives

The project has two main objectives:

- To experiment a literacy programme for women and young ladies integrated into development activities and structures aimed at protecting the mother and child.

- To ensure multiplier effects and durability over time for this project through a decentralized system involving local structures and popular participation.

2.2.2 Strategy

The strategy centres around the following:

- Progressive establishment;

- Integration of literacy schemes into promotional activities (socio-economic and socio-sanitary);

- Empowerment of local authorities for programme planning, execution, follow-up and evaluation;

- Gradual take-over of the programme management by the local people and organizations;

- Integration of literacy schemes into already existing development projects in order to ensure their continuity and financial and material support.

2.2.3 Activities

These cover the following four areas:

- Public education, which is carried out at the pre-literacy stage but continues during the campaign period with a view to greater mobilization of people.

- The training is organized at two levels for participants, over a three-year period - six months each year. It is aimed at enabling them to face the various problems encountered by their community.

- Training for the group leaders who are also re-oriented each year and whom we will be discussing in detail.

- Follow-up and evaluation - the first being decentralized at the national, indeed local level and the second at national level. Both activities allow for the necessary re-orientations which, in line with the people's responses, aim at a greater satisfaction of grass-root needs.

- Production of teaching material through workshops involving trainers and technicians at the national and regional levels. The material is designed bearing in mind the needs expressed by the people themselves as well as the opportunities offered by the development projects involving them.

2.2.4 Training of trainers

Given the wide experience of training trainers for the grass-roots training programmes, the programme has devised a new approach which has yielded positive results over the two-year period of the project.

The project planners, eager to move beyond the conventional type of literacy programme leader meant to transform him into a true trainer of rural people and a veritable development worker who, by his origin, involvement and stability, belongs to the community in which he works.

The following training construct was designed to provide the group leader/trainer with the means of achieving set objectives.

- Identification and recruitment

Both activities were carried out by the people themselves in co-operation with regional trainers. The selection criteria include the preparedness of the individual, his commitment and recognition of his social value by the community, his stability (especially in relation to women because married women often have to leave the village and because the men also drift from the rural areas), an awareness and broad-mindedness regarding the community's development problems and, lastly, schooling in a formal education system, whether European or Islamic. This last criteria is essential, for it makes the individual's training easy since he would have already gone through the

mechanisms of learning, reading and writing. Experience has shown that if a complete illiterate is recruited, the sheer effort of acquiring writing skills becomes a hindrance. It is usually not easy to find people, especially women, with such qualities in villages, and the result is that men have been recruited for women who do not however see any harm in that provided that "the trainer is from their community".

- Training and re-orientation

During the first year, an initial three-week intensive literacy course is provided to trainers in their native languages to enable them to acquire reading, writing and agricultural skills.

In the second year, the trainers are retrained for a longer period that varies with post-literacy activities and trained to post-literacy Level I. At this level, training is given in such fields as agriculture, animal husbandry, health and environment.

In the third year, the trainers receive more specialized training, after which they are sufficiently equipped to solve the community's immediate problems. It should be noted that the training of the general participants does not wait until after the three-year period of trainer training. Their training starts immediately after each stage of the trainer training which lasts for a shorter period (three to six months) as it is intensive, while that for the general participants ranges from four to six months.

Moreover, trainers are assisted by literacy teachers and such specialists as farm counsellors, agronomists, veterinary scientists, doctors, midwives and co-operative managers. Trainers are grouped by their vernaculars during the training period and this enables them to share their individual experiences with their colleagues.

Their assignment is not limited to teaching at the literacy centres; they are also in charge of supervising the daily activities of their own general trainees and the rest of the community. Thus, they are responsible for controlling the practical application of theoretical knowledge in such areas as market gardening, solar pump, maintenance and book-keepingin for the co-operatives. They are also to ensure that their trainees maintain their literacy levels during the other six months of the year because of the observed tendency for trainees to go partly illiterate during the planting and harvesting seasons.

2.2.5 Prospects

The project is still very young but its evaluation after two years of existence raised great hopes, showing the people's enthusiasm and participation, the success of the literacy scheme and the integration of training into development activities. The existence of problems should, however, be recognized in terms of providing constant pedagogical and technical guidance, the empowerment of local structures, the exercise of skills and the transfer of responsibility.

2.3 Towards total popular participation

The exercise of skills and the transfer of responsibility are the indispensable conditions for genuine and wholehearted popular participation. In both the areas that we have just seen, the major and common goal is to secure autonomy for grass-roots people to take complete control of their financial, material and human development.

For a long time, attempts have been made to establish development projects by imposing techniques and technologies on the so-called beneficiaries of such projects. There have been many failures and the lessons learnt indicate that only such action and makes the individual the major actor in the process of change or evolution should be pursued.

Effective participation is what determines the pace of change. Such participation requires information and training, awareness and acceptance of change, the will to act and react and determination to change and develop. And this can be achieved only through the acquisition of skills, through the possibility of exercising them and by being accepted as responsible.

This individual belongs to a community that has put faith in him by allowing him to be trained. In return, he owes his community the duty of informing and training it.

The question is how much knowledge he is allowed to acquire?

Enough to enable him operate without jeopardizing the power and authority of the one who trained him. This individual, who unconsciously or consciously censures him will filter through the transfer of knowledge in order to keep his own privileges.

Literacy class leaders have had the bitter experience of spreading too much information, thereby, inciting people to revolt, to discuss the quality and price of cotton, to keep better account of their production and, perhaps, even to challenge forestry levies and other taxes.

However, a process is already in motion and grass-roots people are becoming increasingly aware of the need for training to enable them to better understand and manage their rapidly changing environment, to make the best choices and to take the best decisions for their future.